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Viewing cable 06BEIRUT2415, TFLE01: UNSYG PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVE PEDERSON

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Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
06BEIRUT2415	2006-07-18 16:43	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL//NOFORN	Embassy Beirut

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BEIRUT 002415

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/18/2016
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SUBJECT: TFLE01: UNSYG PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVE PEDERSON
SAYS NOW IS TIME FOR A POLITICAL SOLUTION

REF: BEIRUT 2403

Classified By: Ambassador Jeffrey D. Feltman. Reason: Section 1.4 (d).

SUMMARY

1. (C) In a July 18 meeting with the Ambassador and econoff, UNSYG Personal Representative to Lebanon Geir Pederson shared a new draft of the UN proposal to end the fighting (reftel). This document (which has many elements that spell its doom in its current form) is transcribed below in para 3. Pederson said that most of the debate of the plan will be worked out in New York. Regarding Hizballah's strategy to date, Pederson thought that either Hizballah knew the consequences of abducting Israeli soldiers but was ordered to do so by Iran, or, alternatively, Hizballah did not understand it was crossing a red line. Pederson leaned to the latter, saying that he spoke to a Hizballah official on July 12, who did not seem to expect a harsh Israeli response. Pederson favored a political way out of the fighting, saying that Israel cannot destroy Hizballah's military wing without occupying all of Lebanon. He believed Hizballah would be open to a UN deal, even if it meant withdrawing from southern Lebanon. Finally, Pederson reported that Israeli artillery and airstrikes had flattened a swath of land on the Lebanese side of the Blue Line. End summary.

THE NEW DRAFT UN PROPOSAL

2. (C/NF) On July 18, the Ambassador and econoff met with UNSYG Personal Representative to Lebanon Geir Pederson and UN Senior Political Affairs Officer Salman Shaikh at the UN House. Pederson said that the draft UN proposal had changed somewhat since he last saw the Ambassador late on July 16 (reftel). He provided econoff with a copy of the new proposal, which is transcribed below in para 3.

3. (C/NF) Begin text:

"Non-Paper Rev 3 - 17-7/06 BEI 13:00

The following is a rough draft of ideas that could be discussed with the parties by the UN team. The paper will be an internal reference document, and has to be developed and reshaped during the course of the mission.

Element one: Setting the stage

First Step

- a) The UN calls on Hezbollah to transfer the Israeli abducted soldiers to the Government of Lebanon. They would be kept in custody, within the country, under the stewardship of PM Siniora. The Red Cross is allowed to visit them.
- b) The transfer of the captives to the GOL and a lull of hostilities will immediately take effect to permit negotiations.

Second Step

An understanding, as a package deal, between Lebanon and Israel is made through intermediaries based on the following elements:

- a) A cease-fire takes effect.
- b) The Israeli soldiers are transferred to Israel and the three remaining Lebanese detainees in Israel are released.
- c) A buffer zone from the Blue Line to the North of some 20 km is created.
- d) UNIFIL is reconfigured to adapt to the new reality on the ground.
- e) The LAF deploys in the buffer zone pursuant to resolution 425, 426, and 1559. The force deployed should be manned and equipped sufficiently to maintain calm along the Blue Line.

- f) Israel withdraws all its military assets from Lebanese territory and fully respects Lebanon's sovereignty.
- g) The PM of Lebanon sends a Letter to the Secretary-General and the Security Council stating that the GOL, in spite of its reservations, will respect the Blue Line in its entirety until agreements on Lebanon's final international boundaries are made.
- h) A donor organization is established with immediate effect in order secure financing and urgent aid, reconstruction and development package for Lebanon.

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- i) A mechanism is established composed of key regional and international actors in order to monitor and guarantee the implementation of all aspects of the agreement.

Element two: The Security Council

- ¶1. A Security Council resolution would be adopted to help define the contours of a deal. Such a resolution would contain the following elements:
 - i. condemns all violations of the Blue Line
 - ii. calls for an immediate and safe return of kidnapped soldiers
 - iii. deplores the lack of progress on implementing SCR1559, especially in relation to the extension of the government control in the South and the disarmament of all militias
 - iv. Condemns the targeting of civilian infrastructure and other civilian targets
 - v. Deplores the loss of life of civilians, and reminds the parties of their obligations under IHL
 - vi. Deplores the disproportionate/excessive use of force by Israel
 - vii. Call for an immediate cessation of military operations and all use of force and a full implementation of 1559
 - viii. Remind the neighboring countries of their obligation not to interfere in Lebanese affairs etc

Follow up: implementation of 1559

- ¶1. GOL, assisted by an Arab Troika (Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the League of Arab States), will organize an international conference bringing together all Lebanese political factions as well as representatives of the Palestinians in Lebanon in order to agree on a clear timetable for the implementation of the Taif Agreement and further measures needed for Lebanon to comply with its international obligations (SCR 1559). The conference endorses a delineation of Lebanon's international boundaries, including a final resolution to the Sheba'a farmlands issue.
- ¶2. The conclusions of this Conference will be ratified by the Lebanese Parliament, sanctioned by the Arab League and endorsed by the Security Council.
- ¶3. Israel moves back into the armistice agreement of 1949, including its participation in the armistice committee."

End text.

OVER THE HORIZON

- ¶4. (C/NF) Pederson said that most of the revisions and debate on the document in para 3 will be done in New York. Whatever is decided will need UN Security Council support. Pederson then mused about the potential impact of continued hostilities. If Israel continues its military operations, "we'll all lose" but the Shia will be united. Sure, Speaker of Parliament Nabih Berri wants to get rid of Hizballah, but the less than nuanced approach of the Israeli war machine will likely start producing counter-productive results.

HIZBALLAH'S STRATEGY

- 5 (C/NF) Pederson described Hizballah's strategy to date as a mystery. He presented two theories. One, Hizballah knew full well the consequences of abducting Israeli soldiers, but

was ordered by Iran to do so. Two, Hizballah did not understand it was crossing a red line. Pederson leaned toward the latter, noting that he talked with an unnamed Hizballah official on July 12 after the abduction. The Hizballah official was extremely proud. Pederson told him that Hizballah has just started a war, but the official did not seem to understand this point. Pederson reviewed the timeline of escalation and noted that Hizballah took each step (save for the initial abduction operation) only after Israel raised the level of escalation. He expected Hizballah to try and hold back its most "ugly" weapons because Hizballah does not want to be seen as taking the final step on the ladder of escalation.

A POLITICAL WAY

¶6. (C/NF) Pederson said he did not know how much damage Israel has inflicted on Hizballah's military wing but estimated that Hizballah still retained significant

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capabilities. Even if the damage has been great, Hizballah still retains its arms and rocket reserves. The only way Israel can destroy Hizballah's military wing is to occupy the whole of Lebanon. Since that would have unacceptable costs, the only way out for Israel now is a political solution, in Pederson's opinion. If the war drags on, radicalism will likely increase in the Shia community in Lebanon and the region.

¶7. (C/NF) Pederson suggested that Hizballah is now open to some kind of a cease-fire agreement. The Ambassador said that many people argue that a cease-fire now, while Hizballah's strategic capabilities appear largely intact, would simply mean a weaker Siniora government, given the extensive destruction to Lebanon's infrastructure, and thus a relatively stronger Hizballah. Pedersen agreed that Hizballah should not be able to claim victory with a cease-fire, but, brandishing an Israeli Ha'aretz newspaper report, noted that Israel claims to have destroyed 25 percent of Hizballah's capabilities. What cost, Pedersen asked, will Lebanon have to pay for Israel's destruction of another 25 or 50 percent of Hizballah's capability? "What will be left of Siniora?" he asked. "What will be left of Lebanon?"

¶8. (C/NF) In Pedersen's assessment, Hizballah needs to show that it is not an Iranian proxy leading Lebanon to ruin. Thus, Pederson did not rule out that Hizballah would agree to withdraw from southern Lebanon as a part of a Lebanese solution to the crisis. Then a national dialogue and a Taif II could follow. Hizballah, Pederson continued, is closely watching the efforts of the UN team now in Jerusalem. They are hopeful it will work, but if the UN plan is not treated seriously, it could trigger further escalation.

UNIFIL REPORT: ISRAEL CLEARING OUT BORDER ZONE

¶9. (C/NF) Pederson then shared a report from UNIFIL commander Maj. Gen. Alain Pellegrini. Pellegrini reported that the IDF has essentially flattened a swath of land adjacent to the Blue Line on the Lebanese side that runs the length of the Blue Line. The area just north of the Blue Line is as flat as a "football field." Israeli artillery and airstrikes have destroyed all buildings and infrastructure in this swath of land, according to Pederson. Even UNIFIL has positions that are now completely cut-off from serviceable roads.

FELTMAN